



Pieces of Iowa's Past, published by the Iowa State Capitol Tour Guides weekly during the legislative session, features historical facts about Iowa, the Capitol, and the early workings of state government. All historical publications are reproduced here with the actual spelling, punctuation, and grammar retained.

February 6, 2008

THIS WEEK: "War of the Rebellion"

BACKGROUND: One of the pillars in Iowa journalism is Lieutenant-Governor B. F. Gue, of the Fort Dodge North-West. For a dozen years he has been a faithful servant of the people in various responsible offices. There are no negations in his character. Whatever he says or does, is said and done affirmatively and positively. He is an honest and earnest man, well balanced in his organization, intelligent, experienced, and popular. As a writer he is perspicuous and forcible, never dealing in any ambidextrous trope or metaphor. **From *Iowa Old Press* – article: "The Valley and the Shadow: Iowa Journalism"**

"War of the Rebellion" By Ex-Lieutenant Governor B.F. Gue (Published in 1899)

From: *Biographies and Portraits of the Progressive Men of Iowa ~ Leaders in Business, Politics and the Professions Together with an Original and Authentic History of the State*

WAR OF THE REBELLION

The great contest over the extension of slavery in the territories, which had agitated the country for many years, was by the success of the republican party in the election of Abraham Lincoln in November, 1860, substantially settled against the further extension of slavery in the United States. The south clearly saw that this meant a change of policy that would deprive slave holders of the control of the national government in a few years permanently, by the admission of free states, and that there was no hope that the south could ever again reverse this decision. That meant logically the beginning of the destruction of slavery in the United States. They must submit to such a result in the not distant future or separate from the union and found an independent nation to preserve the institution. Before President Lincoln was inaugurated the movement began by which the southern confederacy was organized. Seizure of forts, arms and public property followed. The loyal states were called upon for volunteers to suppress the rebellion. Samuel J. Kirkwood had been elected governor.

When the war of the rebellion began on the 12th of April, 1861, by the confederate army under General Beauregard firing on Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor, Iowa was poorly prepared for war. Our state had very few drilled soldiers ready to march to the defense of the union. Peace had prevailed so long that little attention had been given

by our lawmakers to military organization. When on the 15th of April President Lincoln issued a proclamation calling upon the loyal states for 75,000 volunteers, one regiment only was required from Iowa. On the 17th of April Governor Kirkwood issued his proclamation calling upon the militia of the different counties to organize into companies, with a view to entering the military service of the United States; that one regiment of ten companies of not less than seventy-eight each was required by the 20th of May.

The call for volunteers aroused great enthusiasm in the state, and young men responded in sufficient numbers to have organized several regiments. Of the companies accepted for the First Iowa Volunteer infantry, two were from the county of Dubuque, two from Muscatine, two from Des Moines, and one each from Scott, Linn, Henry and Johnson. As the companies left their homes for the general rendezvous at Keokuk, the friends and neighbors of the citizen soldiers so suddenly called upon to march to the seat of war, assembled and tendered them every mark of honor and admiration for their patriotism, in their power to bestow. Ladies met and helped to provide suitable clothing, uniforms and other equipments. Fine flags were presented with speeches; public dinners and patriotic toasts were tendered; and when the companies departed they were escorted to the trains and steamers by vast crowds of cheering men and sympathizing women. At Keokuk the men were drilled five hours a day; company officers were chosen by ballot, and on the 11th of May the field officers appointed —John F. Bates, colonel; William H. Merritt, lieutenant-colonel, and Asbury B. Porter, major. On the 14th the First Iowa infantry was mustered into the United States service by Lieut. Alexander Chambers of the regular army. On the 3d of May the president had issued a call for 200,000 more volunteers, and the country began to realize that a terrible civil war was upon it, the end of which no one could foresee. The first call for soldiers was for only three months' service, as it was thought by many that the rebellion might be suppressed in that time. But it soon became evident that the south was going to put forth every energy to establish an independent confederacy, and the last call for volunteers was for three years' service.

Governor Kirkwood, finding that a large amount of money must be used in the raising and equipment of volunteers, had called an extra session of the legislature to meet on the 15th of May. But before the legislature could provide money, heavy expenses had been incurred. Governor Kirkwood, Ezekiel Clark, Hiram Price, J. K. Graves and W. T. Smith, in this emergency, raised the money required by their own exertions to pay the Iowa soldiers and supply their necessities, until they could be otherwise provided for.

When the general assembly met in extra session, a large majority of the members felt that in this time of national peril, party spirit should be put aside, and all loyal citizens should unite in an earnest support of the national government. The republicans had a clear majority in each branch of the legislature, but at the opening session of the house they voluntarily divided the offices with the democrats. John Edwards, republican, was chosen speaker, and William Thompson, a prominent democrat and an ex-member of congress, was elected chief clerk by a unanimous vote.

Governor Kirkwood's message stated briefly the action he had taken to raise and equip our state's quota of soldiers called for by the president. The two important objects for which the legislature had been convened, the governor stated, were to provide for the protection of our state against invasion, and to promptly supply the general government all aid required in the suppression of the rebellion.

R. D. Kellogg, the democratic member from Decatur County, promptly offered the following resolution in the house, after the reading of the governor's message:

WHEREAS, The president of the United States has appealed to all loyal citizens to aid the efforts to maintain the honor, integrity and existence of the national union, and suppress treason and rebellion against the federal government; therefore, be it

Resolved, By the house of representatives (the senate concurring) that the faith, credit and resources of the state of Iowa, both in men and money, are hereby irrevocably pledged to any amount and extent which the federal government may demand, to suppress treason, subdue rebellion, enforce the laws, protect the lives and property of all loyal citizens, and maintain inviolate the constitution and sovereignty of the nation.

Resolved, That the governor and secretary of state be and they are hereby authorized to forward a certified copy of these resolutions to the president of the United States.

The resolutions were adopted by a unanimous vote of the house, and on the next day they also passed the senate and were immediately forwarded to President Lincoln. Iowa was one of the first states to thus officially pledge its resources in men and money to the president to preserve the national integrity.

The war session of the legislature lasted but fourteen days, but during that brief period it framed and enacted the following important laws:

An act providing for the organization of the militia of the state.

To provide for raising two regiments of infantry, one battalion of artillery, five companies of cavalry and one regiment of mounted riflemen for the protection of the southern border from invasion, and the northwestern counties from the Sioux Indians.

An act authorizing the governor to purchase arms, ammunition, clothing and other supplies for Iowa troops.

An act providing for raising a "War and Defense Fund " by the issue and sale of state bonds to the amount of \$800,000.

An act providing for the payment of volunteer soldiers of the state until they were mustered into the United States service.

An act authorizing the counties of the state to provide aid for families of volunteers who entered the service.

An act forbidding the commencement of civil suits at law against any volunteer soldier during his term of enlistment.